VOICES FOR SAFE NEIGHBOURHOODS:
AWARENESS AND ASSESSMENT MEAN ACTION
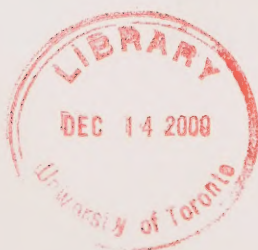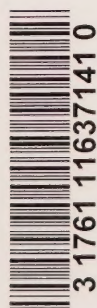
Introduction

Voices For Safe Neighbourhoods is a do-it-yourself guide to improving residential safety for people in any community. The result of a partnership between CMHC and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the guide describes a step-by-step program that helps interested people work together to improve the safety of their neighbourhoods.

The program described in this guide integrates the knowledge of experts and the experience of residents and others who have already been through the process to create a practical problem-solving method for community members. Using this common-sense approach, local coordinators can involve people quickly and easily, as and when they are needed, and with very little preparation time.

Description of Publication

The guide consists of three chapters and appendices containing examples of tools to be used during the safety audit.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of a "safety audit" and explains how it can help people create safer neighbourhoods and feel safer in their communities. This section stresses the importance of getting residents to talk about their safety concerns and the dangers they see in their neighbourhoods. It also emphasizes the need to involve local business people, politicians, volunteers and police as partners in their efforts.

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Chapter 1 also identifies the characteristics and responsibilities of a successful audit coordinator. It suggests that the guide will save the coordinator time by:

- helping him or her organize;
- providing step-by-step instructions; and
- giving examples of tools such as letters and checklists that allow the coordinator and participants to adapt the system to their needs quickly and easily.

Chapter 2 describes how to perform the safety audit. Specifically, it outlines the tasks required to complete each of 5 steps.

Organizing for a safety audit

For Step 1, the report describes how to get local people and groups involved in discussing safety issues and interested in conducting a safety audit in the community. It also lays out the process of organizing the first meeting and setting dates for the next steps to be taken.

Developing the checklists

The purpose of Step 2 is to determine the safety issues relevant to the neighbourhood. It includes identifying the safety areas, understanding and, if necessary, modifying the sample audit checklist so that it fits the neighbourhood. Planning the "Walk Around" to work through the checklist is also described.

Doing the safety audit

For Step 3, the guide outlines the process of meeting before the Walk Around to orient the people conducting the audit. It describes what to look for during the Walk Around and the importance of preparing and distributing summary reports to all interested people.

Recommending ways to improve safety

In the 4th step, the guide describes how the participants should meet again to create a list of actions to improve neighbourhood safety. It also outlines a procedure for prioritizing the actions to be taken and creating an action worksheet. The action worksheet includes:

- issues to be resolved;
- tasks involved in resolving issues;
- persons responsible for completing the various tasks;
- resources required; and
- completion dates for each task.

The end result is a Safe Neighbourhood Action Plan. This Action Plan serves as a tool to help coordinators organize the work to be done, map progress and communicate with new participants.

Making your neighbourhood safer

The final step explains what needs to be done to bring about the changes set out in the Action Plan. It describes how to publicize the results of the safety audit and how to involve people in helping to make real change through writing letters and following up with telephone calls.

It also suggests holding an update meeting to review the results of the Action Plan and to give public acknowledgement and thanks for completed actions that have made the community safer.

The last chapter in the guide, Chapter 3, is a listing of related information resources including reports, videos and checklists available from CMHC.

Implications for the Housing Industry

Voices for Safe Neighbourhoods helps people take action to improve not only the safety of their communities and their feeling of safety in the community, but also their commitment to ongoing neighbourhood improvement.

By outlining the rationale for, and the steps involved in a safety audit, this guide helps build some of the skills and knowledge needed to keep residents committed to the long, ongoing process of creating safer, healthier neighbourhoods.

When people are committed to the health and safety of their neighbourhoods, everyone benefits —the residents, the businesses that serve them and the local housing industry that helps to maintain their homes, apartments and properties.

Housing Research at CMHC

Under Part IX of the *National Housing Act*, the Government of Canada provides funds to CMHC to conduct research into the social, economic and technical aspects of housing and related fields, and to undertake the publishing and distribution of the results of this research.

This fact sheet is one of a series intended to inform you of the nature and scope of CMHC's research.

This **Research Highlights** fact sheet is one of a wide variety of housing-related publications produced by CMHC.

For a complete list of **Research Highlights**, or for more information on CMHC housing research and information, please contact:

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